

## Message Text

SECRET

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12

ACTION EA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 PM-03 DODE-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00

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P 180956Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4598

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI PRIORITY

USLO PEKING PRIORITY

AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY

S E C R E T SINGAPORE 0800

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, SN, TW

SUBJECT: TRAINING OF SINGAPORE ARMED FORCES IN TAIWAN

REF: SINGAPORE 0696

1. ADDRESSEES SHOULD BE AWARE THAT CHICAGO DAILY NEWS CORRESPONDENT KEYES BEECH WILL SHORTLY BE FILING STORY REPORTING THAT SINGAPORE ARMED FORCES ARE RECEIVING TRAINING ON TAIWAN. UPON LEARNING THAT BEECH HAD WRITTEN SUCH A STORY I ARRANGED TO TALK TO HIM TO LEARN DETAILS, AND HE GAVE ME FOLLOWING ACCOUNT:

2. ACCORDING TO BEECH, HE FIRST HEARD ABOUT TRAINING OF SINGAPORE ARMED FORCES ON TAIWAN SEVERAL MONTHS AGO DURING VISIT TO TAIPEI. FROM SOURCES THERE HE HEARD THAT FORCES AMOUNTED TO ABOUT TWO BRIGADES ANNUALLY (5-6,000 MEN) INVOLVING INFANTRY, ARMOR, AND ARTILLERY, IN SEPARATE SITES WITH HEADQUARTERS ESTABLISHED IN TAIPEI. BEECH SAID THAT ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT FILE STORY AT THAT TIME HE KEPT INFORMATION IN MIND IN HOPES OF LEARNING FURTHER DETAILS IN SINGAPORE.

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3. FOLLOWING SINGAPORE PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW'S VISIT TO

TAIPEI LAST JANUARY, BEECH SAID HE AGAIN CHECKED HIS TAIWAN SOURCES AS TO WHAT HAD HAPPENED DURING VISIT, AND WAS TOLD THAT LEE KUAN YEW HAD MET WITH CHIANG CHING-KUO AND THAT AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED TO DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF SINGAPORE FORCES TRAINING ANNUALLY ON TAIWAN.

4. UPON ARRIVING IN SINGAPORE ABOUT TWO WEEKS AGO, BEECH CLAIMED TO HAVE DISCOVERED THAT FACT OF TAIWAN TRAINING FOR SINGAPORE FORCES WAS "OPEN SECRET" AMONG SINGAPORE PRESS CIRCLES, WHO HAD NEVERTHELESS NOT REPORTED IT OUT OF DEFERENCE TO SENSITIVITIES OF SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT. BEECH STATED THAT HE HAD RAISED THIS SUBJECT IN INTERVIEW FEBRUARY 13 WITH PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW, WHO ACKNOWLEDGED "OFF THE RECORD" THAT TAIWAN TRAINING HAD IN FACT OCCURRED. LEE ALLEGEDLY SAID THAT CIRCUMSTANCES WERE WELL KNOWN IN SINGAPORE, AND THAT "OTHERS" WERE AWARE AS WELL. (BEECH TOOK THIS TO MEAN THAT THE PRC HAD KNOWLEDGE.) LEE ASKED NOT TO BE QUOTED. UPON HIS DEPARTURE FROM INTERVIEW IN COMPANY WITH PM LEE'S PRESS SECRETARY, JAMES FU, LATTER MENTIONED THAT TAIWAN TRAINING RESULTED FROM MALAYSIAN DENIAL OF SIMILAR TRAINING FACILITIES TO SINGAPORE.

5. BEECH HAS DECIDED TO GO AHEAD AND FILE THE STORY REGARDLESS OF ANTICIPATED ADVERSE REACTION ON PART OF PM LEE AND GOS AUTHORITIES IN GENERAL. TO HIM IT CLEARLY REPRESENTS A SCOOP, AND WORTH THE PRICE OF POSSIBLY BEING DENIED ENTRY TO SINGAPORE IN THE FUTURE. HE REMARKED TO ME THAT IT WAS AMAZING THAT THE MATTER HAD BEEN KEPT A SECRET FOR SO LONG, SINCE EVEN FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS RESIDENT IN SINGAPORE WERE AWARE OF IT (IN THIS RESPECT, HE MENTIONED DENNIS BLOODWORTH OF THE LONDON OBSERVER). HE MAINTAINED THAT HE PLANNED ONLY TO MENTION IN GENERAL TERMS THE MATTER OF SINGAPORE ARMED FORCES TRAINING ON TAIWAN. AS ORIGINALLY WRITTEN HE HAD MADE REFERENCE TO POSSIBILITY THAT U.S. ADVISERS ON TAIWAN HAD ASSISTED IN THIS TRAINING, BUT DROPPED THIS ASPECT UPON MY INSISTENCE THAT SUCH A SUPPOSITION WAS ENTIRELY WITHOUT FOUNDATION.

6. COMMENT: INFORMATION ON TRAINING ACQUIRED BY BEECH FROM SOURCES IN TAIWAN AND IN SINGAPORE IS REASONABLY CLOSE TO THE MARK, INCLUDING AGREEMENT RECENTLY REACHED BETWEEN LEE KUAN YEW AND CHIANG CHING-KUO ON DOUBLING THE NUMBERS OF SINGAPORE

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FORCES INVOLVED (REFTEL. IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT SINGAPORE JOURNALISTS ARE AWARE OF TRAINING WHICH HAS BEEN CITED IN PUBLICATION OF UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE STUDENTS UNION. I AM AFRAID WE WILL SIMPLY HAVE TO RIDE THIS ONE OUT. BEECH IS QUITE CORRECT IN ASSUMPTION THAT PRC IS AWARE OF SINGAPORE ARMED FORCES TRAINING ON TAIWAN, SINCE MATTER WAS REFERRED TO BY SINGAPORE FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM IN CONVERSATION WITH CHAO KUAN-HUA LAST SPRING. CHINESE HAVE SO FAR BEEN ABLE TO LIVE WITH THE SITUATION IN

ABSENCE OF ANY PUBLICITY, BUT MAY FIND IT HARDER TO DO SO AFTER  
BEECH'S STORY BREAKS. HE DEPARTS TODAY, FEBRUARY 18.  
HOLDRIDGE

SECRET

NNN

## Message Attributes

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